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FOREIGN DEPARTMENT

IN CHARGE OF

LAVINIA L. DOCK, R.N.

It is difficult to speak in terms of moderation of the latest attempt of the British Anti-registrationists to bind and shackle the nursing profession by one grand sweeping *coup* as related in the *British Journal of Nursing* of January 15. At this moment of national peril for Great Britain, when Englishwomen have suspended their claims for political justice to go to her aid; when nurses have ceased for the time of crisis to press their long campaign for legal status and have with one accord offered themselves to their country's service—this moment is selected by a set of persons with the usual array of high sounding names and titles to bring forward the old, well known, and hitherto defeated proposals to bring the entire body of trained nurses under the domination of an autocratic outside body of rulers through a so-called "College of Nursing" (voluntary) incorporated under the Board of Trade. This proposition, circulated on the official paper of the Joint War Committee, is signed by its chairman. It has been put forth without consulting any organizations of nurses, and cannot but throw their members into a most trying situation. They must resist it to the utmost, and their would-be rulers and masters will raise the cry "unpatriotic" which is now so direfully potent in crushing every protest against losses of civil liberty and encroachments upon human rights. The antis have never done anything worse or taken a meaner opportunity. Slippery as they have been in the past, no one could have expected this, even from them, at such a moment as the present.

Briefly outlined, the plan is for a council to be nominated by the chairman and governors of leading hospitals (who already "have more absolute power over the women they control than is permitted to any other class of the community" says Mrs. Fenwick in her editorial) and this council shall have power to form a Consultation Board, appoint examiners, and *exempt* certain training schools from having to meet central examination by accepting their own internal examinations. The "College of Nursing" is to be promoted in an equally undemocratic way. The powers sought will "control all branches of women's work connected with hospitals," and various grades of nurses are suggested as desirable. As usual Mrs. Fenwick (whose only son is in the army) lost not a moment in sounding a ringing alarm, and we can only wait until we learn how this last and most unworthy attempt on women's liberties turns out, and hope that the resolute and trained leaders among English nurses will once more defeat a treacherous enemy of women workers. The various evidences of confusion in nursing and First Aid during the emergencies of war have been advanced as a reason for the proposed control of nurses. But Mrs. Fenwick says, editorially:

> No one will be surprised to learn that the Hon. Arthur Stanley, in his official position on the Joint War Committee, has recognized the disorganized condition of the nursing profession; but surely as a Member of Parliament he must have been already aware that the most thoughtful and liberal-minded matrons and nurses have for years been pleading with Parliament to grant them statutory authority to organize their own profession as they have a right to do, and that the blame must be placed on the House of Commons, which, year after year has acquiesced in the refusal of the Premier to grant facilities in that Chamber for the second reading of the Nurses Bill.

The truth of this cries to heaven. As usual there is a lesson for us in this occurrence and we are prompted to warn nurses in this and other countries to strive incessantly to gain and to hold fast to their legal professional status and standards. It may be that, if the prevailing world epidemic of insanity spreads to the United States, American nurses will meet similar questions.

It may sound like a cynical question; but it occurs to one, nevertheless: Would it not be more in keeping with the expressed gratitude of the English nation toward Edith Cavell, for Englishmen to show the profession to which she belonged as much respect and consideration as the Welsh miners and British trade-unionists very rightly and very justly receive?

We quote the following from *The Army and Navy Journal:*

Sphagnum or bog moss, in common use throughout the United States by florists and nurserymen for packing plants and trees, is being used in European hospitals for surgical dressing. Augustus E. Ingram, American Consul at Bradford, England, reports that sphagnum has greater springiness than cotton wool, and the patients like it better for that reason. It has the power not only of absorbing discharges, but of diffusing them throughout the whole pad, while cotton wool absorbs quickly, but passes the discharge straight through the bandages and bedclothes. The moss dressing also disinfects, possibly by the air in its numerous fine tubules.